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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001595

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA  
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/04/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#) [EFIN](#) [SNAR](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: EFCC DEMARCHE DELIVERED TO MFA

REF: A. STATE 84635  
[1](#)B. ABUJA 1573  
[1](#)C. ABUJA 1574

Classified By: Acting DCM Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Charge d'Affaires delivered reftel demarche on the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to Minister of Foreign Affairs Ojo Maduekwe on August 8. The FonMin had already received the information from the demarche through a dispatch from the Nigerian Embassy in Washington outlining a discussion between AF DAS Todd Moss and the Nigerian DCM. During the meeting, the FonMin responded with essentially the same points the Attorney General, Secretary to the Federal Government and EFCC Chair had made (refs B and C.) The FonMin understood the demarche point on visa revocations and travel bans as a threat, and expressed dismay that the U.S. had apparently resorted to rhetoric over dialogue. He purported to have been unaware of our concerns regarding the EFCC and urged us to make better use of his good offices to alert President Yar'Adua to future issues.  
END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) At approximately 2:30pm local time on August 8, the Charge received a call directly from the FonMin inviting her to visit as soon as possible, pre-empting a scheduled 3:30pm appointment to present the demarche to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) U/S for Regions Eineje Onubo. After arrival, the FonMin explained that he received a dispatch from the Nigerian Embassy in Washington, outlining the discussion between DAS Moss and the Nigerian DCM, which prompted him to reach out immediately to the Embassy. The Foreign Minister said he was disappointed that representatives from the Mission had not come to him to discuss the situation as friends and that the USG had now resorted to "threats."

[1](#)3. (C) The FonMin expressed dismay that the USG had suddenly put Nigeria "in the same boat as Iran or Zimbabwe" by threatening travel bans and/or the revocation of U.S. visas. He added that "friends do not threaten friends" and inquired as to what had changed so suddenly to warrant such a harsh message. The FonMin claimed he was unaware of the USG's increased concern and frustration; however the Charge pointed out that the Ambassador had indeed raised our concerns over the EFCC with him, EFCC Chair Farida Waziri, and President Yar'Adua over the past months.

RIBADU

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¶4. (C) The FonMin assumed recent press reports about former EFCC Chair Nuhu Ribadu's demotion and possible arrest prompted this message. The FonMin, therefore, proceeded to praise Ribadu and his strong performance as EFCC Chair and intimated that he was in a position to intervene to protect him. But he reminded the Charge that the USG should focus on the importance of supporting institutions and not individuals. The Charge noted that although the USG was highly concerned about Ribadu's treatment and appreciated assurance provided by the Attorney General and the Secretary to the Federal Government, the real issue was the GON's commitment to fight corruption. The Charge added that in light of a series of recent events involving the EFCC and inaction on cases against prominent former officials, there were questions regarding the influence that those under investigation could bring to bear, which in turn raised issues about the commitment and credibility of the GON on a range of issues, including anticorruption.

#### LACK OF EFCC PROGRESS

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¶5. (C) Addressing the lack of progress on high-level corruption cases currently being prosecuted by the EFCC, the FonMin replied the EFCC is undergoing a transition and that both the institution and its new Chairman needed more time. The FonMin added that Mrs. Waziri would most likely demonstrate patience when bringing high level cases to court in order to ensure convictions. The FonMin noted the unfortunate possibility of corruption within the judiciary, especially in high level cases where the defendants could

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easily buy a verdict, as one reason for Waziri's caution. He further stated that Waziri wants to be 100% sure she will win because any high level loss would only embolden the criminals and damage the EFCC's reputation.

#### EFCC REDEPLOYMENTS

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¶6. (C) In response to USG concerns that large scale redeployments of experienced and trained EFCC staff undermined the organization's capabilities, the FonMin replied that it was good for officers with quality training provided by the USG and others to take their experience to other areas of law enforcement. Noting the level of corruption within the police force, the FonMin explained that the redeployed officers would sensitize others on the subject of corruption, and even suggested the MFA could use some of their expertise.

#### FRIENDS DON'T THREATEN FRIENDS

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¶7. (C) The FonMin stated that as a friend, the USG has every right to make the argument that President Yar'Adua and the GON were not handling things very well, but warned of crossing the line into meddling. Charge responded that, as a friend, the USG had no intention of meddling but it was in both our interests that Nigeria continue to move forward on anticorruption efforts and in other areas, and reiterated concerns that forward momentum had ceased and even been reversed. The Charge added that the demarche was not meant to threaten, but was a direct reflection of the seriousness with which the USG viewed recent developments and our desire for the GON to take appropriate action. She provided a copy of demarche talking points so that he could read this for himself. The FonMin closed with the following two remarks: 1.) If messages like the one delivered continue, the FonMin predicted a "looming diplomatic crisis" on our hands that must be resolved quickly. 2.) The USG must "step down" from the rhetoric and return to the use of conversation without the cloud of threat in order to maintain a productive relationship.

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